

*Lackawanna historical society, Lackawanna, Pa.*

LACKAWANNA INSTITUTE

OF

HISTORY AND SCIENCE

POETS AND POETRY

OF THE

WYOMING \* VALLEY

BY WILL S. MONROE



SPECIAL PUBLICATION No. 2.

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Monograph



GIFT  
PUBLISHER  
JUN 10 '25

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# POETS AND POETRY OF THE WYOMING \* VALLEY BY WILL S. MONROE.

REPRINTED FROM  
THE SATURDAY ARGUS  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF

The Lackawanna Institute of History and Science.

SCRANTON:

MARCH 1887.

TO give a critical and historical analysis of the poetry of the Wyoming Valley, necessitates the exploring of a hitherto unwritten department of local literature. Mr. John S. McGroarty, in his *Poets and Poetry of Wyoming Valley*, gives selections from the better-known versifiers, but no critical or historical reminiscences. For this brief survey I have taken possession of many widely-scattered facts and have endeavored to mould them into a history of Wyoming Valley Poetry; and, while I have admired the songs of our native writers and made the touch of the critical finger somewhat gentle, I have sought to point out the powers and limitations of the singers and emphasize their imperfections.

More than a hundred years have passed since the first local writers began to drink inspiration from the beauties of this historic valley and to pour forth their intoxication with sparkling emications of poetic fancy. It was in 1785 that Uriah Terry wrote his "Wyoming Massacre;" in 1810 that Charles F. Wells wrote the "Warriors of Wyoming," and in 1812 that James Sinton wrote the "Poor Man and the Doctor." Edward Chapman, Charles Miner, and Josiah Wright helped to swell the flood of local verse during the opening years of the present century, but

their rhymes contain little merit and can scarcely be called poetry. The published verses of Amos Sisty, Andrew Beaumont, A. T. Lee, Sarah Miner, and Charles Mowery evince a degree of poetic talent, though unequal and faulty in finish.

*The Literary Visitor*, established at Wilkes-Barre in 1813, served as a medium of communication for the early writers of this section. It was royal octavo size, a weekly journal, and published by Steuben Butler. *The Visitor* was primarily a literary periodical, and the editor, in the salutatory of the initial number, assures his readers that the paper will be devoted to every department of knowledge "which can be considered useful, interesting, or amusing to all classes of readers—biographical sketches of the most important personages of America and Europe—anecdotes of wit and humor—important facts in the history of nature—remarkable events in the history of nations—the *finest flights of the muse*—the selected beauties of ancient and modern eloquence—such essays as will instruct correctly in morality and duty, in education, science and the arts; and these selected from the best writers, will appear in a dress calculated to form a correct taste in English composition." He also informs his



readers that "the great part of the paper, instead of being occupied with advertisements which are useful only to a few men of business, will be filled with such a diversity of matter, that it can hardly fail of obtaining a welcome reception from every reader." This promise was well kept. It contained no advertisements during the two years that it existed, and was the principal market for the wares of the early Wyoming Valley writers.

*The Frontier Maid, or a Tale of Wyoming*, was the first poetical volume published here. It was a metrical romance of two hundred pages written by Joseph McCoy and published at Wilkes-Barre in 1819 by Samuel Maffet and Steuben Butler. It is a narrative of the massacre of Wyoming, has ten or a dozen prominent characters, is divided into five cantos, and has an appendix of nineteen pages of notes explaining the geographical and historical allusions of the poem. Mature years painfully revealed to the author the defects of the poem and he subsequently collected and burned all the copies he could get. Although characterized for its inequalities and absurdities, *The Frontier Maid* is not wholly without merit. Here and there a line can be found having the genuine poetic ring. Mr. McCoy was, of course, too deficient in constructive art to elaborate a well-sustained narrative; but, had he been less ambitious and given more finish to what he undertook, he might have written clever verses.

*The Harp of the Beech Woods*, by Juliana Frances Turner, was published at Montrose in 1822 by Adam Waldie. The selections are chiefly lyrical, of which "My Home in the Beech Woods" is perhaps the best. "Evening," a dainty pastoral, is a poem of remarkable purity and simplicity; and "The Humming Bird" and "Happiness at Home" are delicate and picturesque descriptive lyrics. The volume contains a dozen sonnets which detract from the merit of the book, since the author evidently knew little or nothing of the mechanical construction of the sonnet. The sonnet "To a Mother" is rich in sentiment; and in the one on "My Rhymes" she displays a genuine sense of refined humor.

*The Wyoming Monument*, "A Poem by the Lu-Natic Bard of Wyoming," was published at Wilkes-Barre in 1841 by Anthony P. Brower, the author, and dedicated to the Ladies' Monumental Association of Wilkes-Barre. It is an attempt at lyric poetry, but has no merit, whatever, and teems with the eccentricities which characterized its author. About the only redeeming feature of the book is the twelve-page appendix of explanatory notes. A receipt for the price of the book, in the bard's own handwriting, was attached to the first page of each copy sold.

Richard Drinker and Edward E. Le Clerc were both writers of meritorious verse. Mr. Drinker's "Address to a Land Tortoise," published in *Chandler's Magazine* of Philadelphia, in 1819, shows him to have been possessed of a rich sense of humor combined with all the fervor of a true poet. "Christmas," after the style of Burns, is humorous, witty and genial. His poems are wanting in deep pathos and originality of thought, but are distinguished for their vigorous common sense and unique execution. Edward E. LeClerc another writer of clever verse, possessed the divine gift of song to a remarkable degree. His best poem, "The Massacre of Wyoming," was read at the commencement exercises of Dickinson College in July, 1839, and subsequently published in *Godey's Lady Book*. This, and the poem on the death of his friend Lieutenant James Monroe Bowman, represents him at his best, although in all his writings he displays an exquisite sense of rhythm and a remarkable instinct in the choice of words.

Magazine readers of forty years ago doubtless remember often having read verses by "Edith May"—Miss Anna Drinker, of Montrose. During these years she wrote extensively for *Graham's Magazine*, *Surtain's Magazine*, and the *Home Journal*, then edited by N. P. Willis and George P. Morris. A collected volume of her poems was published by E. H. Butler & Co., of Philadelphia, in 1851. The preface to this edition was written by Mr. Willis, who said of her poems, "The rhythm has an instinctive power and dignity, showing the key to which her mind is ha-



bitually tuned, the conception and management of the subjects being full of originality and beauty." A second edition of her poems was published by the Butlers two years later. It contained a portrait of the author, copied from a sketch of her by Wm. H. Furness. This volume was elegantly bound and profusely illustrated by Cheney, Furness, Devereux, Grealbach and others of her artist friends. The second edition being soon out of print, a third edition was published by James Miller, of New York, in 1874, which was shortly afterwards entirely exhausted. The second and third editions, which were alike except in mechanical execution, each contained sixty selections, fifteen of which were purely descriptive. "Count Julio," an Italian story which was written when Miss Drinker was less than seventeen years old, ranks as a masterpiece in the line of blank verse. "Christmas," a ballad, illustrates well the author's freshness and richness of style, and "Rosabelle" and "Lady Clare," the delicacy and strength of her expression. "Magdalena's Confession," remarkable alike for its purity and simplicity, contains some exquisite passages. Her "Two Chants," Mr. Willis said, "shows the port and mien of one whose work in the highest fields of poetry would be that of inborn stateliness and fitness." In "Forest Scenes" she manifests a fondness for country hills and fields; and all the sights and sounds of greenwood witchery are there to make innocent and sincere the inspiration of this singer. Her subjects and treatment, it is true, are usually in the direction of the sad and mystical—the poetical chords oftener vibrating to the mournful surges of the darkly flowing river of Lethe than to the cheerful music of bright waters that break on fair shores; yet her poems of sorrow and doom prove emblematic of her own future and the weight of sorrow that oppressed her soul.

Lizzie Gordon was also born at Montrose and lived there until she was thirteen years old, when she was sent to the Female Seminary at Easton; at fourteen she became one of the teachers of that institution and two years

later she returned to Wyoming Valley and for six years taught in the public schools of Pittston; the eight following years were spent at Pittsburg as assistant principal of a graded school, returning to Wyoming Valley in 1854 where remained up to October 1884, when the Master called her to a higher service. During the six years preceding her death, she was a helpless invalid and suffered intense bodily pains from an incurable malady, all of which were borne with genuine Christian fortitude. It was during this period that many of her best poems were written. In the preface to *The World's Future* she says, "Situated as I am, a helpless and hopeless invalid, I have been constrained to fill up the time in exercising my mental powers to ameliorate the dull monotony of a sick room and in some measure render life a blessing." Besides her poetical contributions to the newspapers of this locality, she published two pamphlet-volumes of verse, *Among the Flowers*, in 1879, and *The World's Future*, in 1881. The verses of both volumes breathe the true spirit of religious fervor, and though somewhat sad in tone, they are eminently sweet, strong, and original. When the eyes are full of tears we can hardly expect the heart to pour forth a joyous lay; yet to say that Lizzie Gordon's poems are sad, is not to declare that they are morbid or hopeless. There is a simple sweetness, an earnest goodness, in her verses which invariably win the heart of the reader. In her religious poems, the peculiar mental traits of the author are best exhibited; and however faulty they may be in artistic respects, the purity of their sentiment and freshness of their atmosphere are proof against adverse criticism. "Let Me Die" and "Ministering Spirits" show best how delicate the strings upon which she played and how finely attuned they were to impressions.

Hon. Steuben Jenkins, the poet historian, was born at Wyoming in September 1819; his education was obtained mainly at the common schools; in 1847 was admitted to the practice of law in Luzerne county and shortly afterwards he was in charge of the Foreign Mail



Bureau at Washington for several years; he served three terms in the State Legislature, has always been identified with the educational, historical, and literary interests of Wyoming Valley, and through a period of public services covering many years, there has been neither flaw nor shadow in his consistent and exemplary career. As an author, he has written much and well, but published little. Full of vigor, originality and dramatic power, his verses breathe the crispness of the morning air and the pungency of spring buds; and however defective we may find the finish of his work, we cannot but admit that their author possesses a well-stored mind and a high degree of poetic inspiration which is always drawn from Nature's great fountains. "Wyoming," a tale of the Revolutionary war, "Manitou of Wyoming," and "The Concord Chase," his longest poems, contain many delightful descriptive passages. "The Forest of Life" is a collection of his shorter bits of verse, many of which evince a fair degree of lyric power.

Mrs. Harriet Gertrude Watres, the sense of whose loss is so fresh upon us, was by nature singularly sweet and musical and her poems sing of themselves. She sang as the birds—in pure, serene and hymn-like roundelays—and her songs are as sincere and genuine as those of the sylvan minstrels, possessing all the hilarity of the bobolink, the faith of the song-sparrow, the love of the blue-bird, and the spiritual serenity of the hermit-thrush. Finished and original in style, delicate in sentiment, fertile in imagination, and musical in expression, Mrs. Watres was a poet of high order, and her verses rank with the very best yet produced by Wyoming Valley singers. *Cobwebs*, a volume containing one hundred and twenty-five short poems, was recently published by D. Lothrop and Company, of Boston, and its merits can not but impress the most careless reader. "Barefoot" illustrates how well she succeeded in investing common ideas with new charms; and in "Caged" her rich imagination arises to the sphere of the true ideal. Deep pathos and refined humor are always nicely wedded.

At every shoaling in the serious stream of "The Quarrel," "Through the Keyhole," and "Ripe Cherries," a vigilant sense of humor ripples. "Woodland Friends," and "My Cottage Home" exhale the fresh breath of a May orchard; and "Love's Loss" and "Lulline" contain all the sweetness and melody, and much of the genuine touch of true poetry. Her melody is so perfect that were not these pleasant fancies as philosophical as they are musical, I should be inclined to charge their author with singing simply for the music's sake; but combined with all this melody is a depth of rare thought and fine poetical imagery. "Bret Harte" and "Snow Birds" are genial poems, and the former is constructed with remarkable ingenuity. In "Twice Waiting," "Rae," and "Faces on the Street," she manifests a thorough understanding of the language of natural emotions and a profound knowledge of the reserves and refinement of poetic art. Few writers have better succeeded in blending exquisite melody with serene, satisfying, and uplifting sentiment, or given us a finer adjustment of word to thought; and with an ever changing variety of measure, she not unfrequently interests the reader quite as much in the treatment of a subject as in the subject itself. To those who know the worth of her poetry, it is a matter of regret that she is not more generally read; but until the people of culture in this rich valley come to realize the genuine work which in obscurity and discouragement the few are doing for its honor, neither the local writers nor their friends need feel that popular neglect signifies merited condemnation.

Mrs. M. L. T. Hartman, who has written extensively both in prose and verse during the past forty years, was born at Huntington in 1817; and her early education was that afforded by the common schools of nearly three quarters of a century ago. She early formed a taste for reading and writing and manifested, even in childhood, an inventive faculty. After marrying, though burdened with the usual domestic cares, she kept up her habits of study and wrote frequently for the



local papers. For many years, both before and after her marriage, she was engaged in teaching; and in the school-room she found a successful exercise of her talents and a field of untiring influence and usefulness. During the civil war she materially aided the cause of the North both by personal aid and the wit of her brilliant pen. Mrs. Hartman has always been in demand as an after-dinner poet: and much that she has written was designed for mere temporary effect and passed away with the occasions which called it forth. She has, however, written many odes, pastorals, and descriptive lyrics which teem with wit, sentiment, patriotism, and poetic beauty. There is in her writings a blending of strength and delicacy, a fondness for country hills and fields and a disposition to gladden and beautify even dull places. She is in love with the singing birds, the breezy fields, and the wayside brooks; they sing to her and she in turn sings of them. She worships freedom and republics; and her intense patriotism, hatred of wrong, and inexhaustible sympathy for struggling humanity are always expressed with remarkable force and beauty both in her prose and verse. Her *History of Huntington Valley*, published in the *Mountain Echo*, was a work of great labor, originality, and ability. She gave to it that careful and intelligent research, which enabled her to make it as valuable for its accuracy as attractive by all the graces of style.

Miss P. A. Culver and her sister Mrs. Mary Dale (Culver) Evans have long been identified with the literature of northeastern Pennsylvania. They were born in Franklin township, Luzerne County, and obtained their education in the district schools and at the Wyoming Seminary, from the latter of which Mary Dale was a graduate. They early manifested a taste for literature and before they had reached the age of eighteen both were writing for the well-known periodicals of the day. Although wholly unlike, there is in their writings the same trace of keen sensibility to natural impressions, tenderness of feelings, and delicate perceptions. Their poems possess a freshness of expression, an air

of melancholy tenderness, and a rustic versification that leads the reader to suspect that more is due to nature than to study, to genius than to art. "Alone" and "Little Jane" are perhaps Miss P. A. Culver's best poems; they are not great creations, yet their diction is elegant and their conceptions pure and tender. "In War Times," published in *Forney's Press* in 1862, is treated with great vigor of thought and simplicity of language. "A Decoration Hymn" is a simple lyric that is full of tender sympathy and beauty; it was published in *Godey's Lady Book* in 1876, and was subsequently set to music for a decoration-memorial exercise at Philadelphia. She has also written a number of short stories which bear the impress of an original and well-stored mind. Mary Dale Culver, lately married to Hon. George Evans, of Frenchville, West Virginia, has written verses of considerable merit. She is noted more for beauties of expression than for fine inventive power and vigorous execution. "Under the Daisies" and "The Inner Life" prove her possession of a high degree of poetic vigor.

Philip O'Neill was born in Maryland in 1834; he passed the greater number of his boyhood days in Bradford County, this state, and during the entire time of the civil war he served in the navy. Although gifted by nature with keen sensibilities and a fine poetic temperament, yet for the want of artistic finish much of his writing falls short of being genuine poetry. His verses are all pure in tone and written with candor and charity. Mr. O'Neill is singularly in love with human nature and writes with the eloquence of truth and appreciative sympathy. "The Sister of Charity," "Emma Helme," and "Parted" are as good as could be selected from his many pieces to indicate the healthiness of his lyric impulse.

Homer Greene, Esq., the poet-lawyer, was born at Ariel, Wayne County, this state, January 10, 1853; was graduated from Union College, June, 1876, with the degrees of A. B. and C. E., and from the Albany Law School



in 1877 with the degree of LL. B; admitted to the Wayne County bar December, 1878, since which time he has been in active practice, serving as District Attorney of the County for one term. Such is a meagre outline of his outward life; and now as to his writings: His first literary effort was written while a student at the Riverview Military Academy, Poughkeepsie, New York; it was a story entitled "The Mad Skater," and was published in Wayne Reid's Magazine *Onward* for June, 1869. While a student at Union College he contributed liberally both in prose and verse to college literature, and was special correspondent for the *New York Evening Post*, *Albany Evening Journal*, *Troy Whig*, and *Albany Argus*. "What My Lover Said," his best-known poem, was written during his senior year and first published in the *New York Evening Post*, November 9, 1875, with only the initials "H. G." signed to it. Its merits were patent, and it was widely copied and largely credited to Horace Greeley. The newspapers, however, were soon corrected; and its recognized excellence won for its author the encomiums of the most select critics. In unique conception and artistic execution, the poem is a masterpiece. Every line has compactness, precision, and elegance; it has an unstudied freshness, a sunny humor, and an artistic polish most genuinely the author's own, for Mr. Greene is quite as much a poet of art as a poet of sentiment. "My Daughter Louise" and "Kitly," published in Judge Tourgee's disastrous literary venture, *The Continent*, confirmed his reputation as a poet of the first order. The former is natural, graceful, and tender and infused with just enough sentiment to make it effective; the latter has a playfulness of style and nicety of finish that betray the refined taste and practiced ear of one who has completely captured the spirit of Divine song. "She Kissed the Dead," published in *The Christian Union*, in 1874 and "The Rivals," printed in *The Critic*, in 1885, have an artist-like finish and are written with great animation and deep feeling. In these, as in all his poems, his fancy is of a truly vital character

and his art-instinct thoroughly trustworthy. The two sonnets published in *The Scranton Truth*, "To Rev. H. C. S." and "Reversal," contain real pulses of feeling and flow from a heart full of sweetest affection. Mr. Greene seems quite as much at home in prose compositions as in his verse; and the same individual tone that dominates his poems is equally marked in his stories. "The Professional Juror," which appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1884, "A Thanksgiving Verdict" in *The Albanian* in 1885, "Dick, the Door Boy" and "The Van Slyck Dog-Case" in *The Scranton Truth*, and "The Blind Brother," which won *The Youth's Companion's* fifteen-hundred dollar prize, are all legitimate works of fiction. His themes are original and well chosen; his keen observation penetrated by an imagination which is quickened into activity by a deep and humane sentiment; the tone of his stories is healthy and life giving throughout, and his lay characters transmitted into creatures of flesh and blood; his language is smooth and copious; his descriptive passages are life-like, and his artistic execution not inferior to that of the best novelists of the day.

Miss Susan E. Dickinson is a writer of refined literary tastes and one whose genius Wyoming Valley justly appreciates. Her facile pen has done more, perhaps, to depict the bright side of life in the coal regions than that of any other writer. *The Press* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, of Philadelphia; *The Tribune*, *Herald*, and *Graphic*, of New York, and *The Traveler*, and *Pilot*, of Boston, are some of the journals for which she has written extensively both in prose and in verse during the past fifteen years. Her newspaper articles are full of energy and show care and elaboration—the evidence and fruit of honest, painstaking workmanship; and her book reviews, obituaries and editorials have alike been characterized for their smooth language and rich diction, and as eagerly sought by the metropolitan press as by the reading world generally. Miss Dickinson has also ventured in the department of fiction where she has been eminently successful. "A Christmas



Rehearsal," "Who Shall Win Her?" and "How Christmas Came to Azalea Forrister" are suggestively wrought stories and contain many passages of rich description, eloquent sentiment, simple pathos, and deep, philosophic thought. Strong, however, as Miss Dickinson is as a writer of descriptive newspaper articles, literary criticisms, and clever stories—and her handiwork is always skillful and often imaginative and strong—she has excelled as a writer of verse. Her style is a model of grace, ease and refinement, and many of her poems are constructed with remarkable ingenuity and finished with consummate art. She is seldom at loss for the proper word with which to clothe her idea; her external perceptions are alert and true, and the artistic finish of her poems is truly commendable. "Reubinstein" published in the *New York Tribune*, November, 1872, gives token of a beautiful poetic vein and a sparkingly original style; every line has elegance and flows with its fellows in exquisite harmony. "A Prayer in Blindness," originally published in *The Home Journal*, is one of the finest and best sustained of her poems; it is a masterly rendition of the iambic pentameter blank verse and shows the depth and beauty of her thought. In "Mignonette," "At Vesper Time," and "Oriole," all published in *The Home Journal*, the poet strikes a wider range of melody, especially the latter, which, in its novel and fantastic modulation, approaches Shelley's "Skylark." Her sonnet on "Wordsworth," published in the *New York Independent*, entitles her to a place in the most select circle of modern singers. "The Apostle of Ireland," published in Boyle O'Reilly's *Boston Pilot*, is a medley of six exquisite sonnets whose mechanical construction, with a single exception, is perfect, the merit, in the mechanism of the sixth sonnet, being slightly marred by the grammatical break between the octave and sestet. Miss Dickinson has also written a number of religious and elegiac poems which bear the impress of a finished and original style. "Easter Arpeggios" was published in *The Churchman* and

contained three hundred and twenty-five lines; and "In Memory of Horace Greeley," written for the *New York Tribune* and subsequently published in the *Greeley Memorial Volume*, is rich in both sound and color. Her poems are marked for their melodious versification, beautiful imagery, and moral purity.

Combining in himself the true poet and the skilled novelist, it is difficult to say in which character John E. Barrett has rendered the most distinguished service. He has trodden almost every path of polite literature and gathered flowers from them all. I am inclined however, to believe that he has cultivated the Muses more as a matter of recreation than with any view of building up a reputation as a poet; yet there is quite as much genuine poetry in his verse as sound sense and keen observation in his prose. His poems are vigorously conceived and as vigorously executed; and evince a delicacy and discrimination of taste, an unvarying kindness of heart, and a purity of moral feeling. Never awkward, his style is often spirited and forcible; and his poems at no time bear the mark of chance or haste. When less than nineteen, Mr. Barrett published a book in England which proved a great success, the entire edition being exhausted shortly after its publication. It was entitled *The Wrecked Homesteads* and depicted the Irish Land system in the guise of fiction with remarkable accuracy and freshness. The British press received it very favorably and the conservative *Dublin Nation* gave it a three-column review. *The Irishman*, since merged into *The United Ireland*, the now powerful organ of the Parnell party, likened the story to *The Mill on the Floss* and hailed the author as a new writer of much promise. Mr. Barrett's stories are the fruit of occasional pastimes amid the incessant labors of active journalism; they have been contributed mainly to the *New York Weekly* and the *Philadelphia Saturday Night*. "The Rising Tide," which appeared originally in *The Weekly* and was republished in the *London Budget*, and "The Black List," copied from *Saturday Night* into a Dublin weekly, are



perhaps his best works of fiction. Mr. Barrett is endowed with a clear penetrating observation of the salient and picturesque in human nature, and his stories are pre-eminently stories of character. He has photographed human beings as he found them; and he never palliates crime, but invariably leads his reader to the admiration of virtue and nobility. "The Romance of Razorville," though possessing less merit than some of his other stories, illustrates, with admirable effect, the author's wealth of humor, vast acquired resources, and original intellectual power.

David Morgan Jones, the lawyer-poet, was born in 1843, in the city of New York. Part of his boyhood he spent in Wales. He received his education in that country, at the Scranton High School, and at the Lewisburg University, where he was graduated in 1867. In the following year he was admitted to practice at the Union County bar, but soon removed his office to Wilkes-Barre, where he is still actively pursuing his profession. Mr. Jones' course in literature has naturally been desultory. While possessing a pure quality of poetic talent, it is not often that he is permitted by the exigencies of his business to take from its dusty corner the well-beloved lyre, and charm an idle moment with a song. As rapidly as they are produced, his poems have appeared in the *Philadelphia Press* and other city journals. In 1882, J. B. Lippincott & Company published *Lethe and Other Poems*, through which Mr. Jones is perhaps best known to the public. It had a rapid sale and the edition was soon exhausted. This volume, however, does not contain the best things which he has written. He has done better work since for the *Boston Pilot* and other papers. The leading poem of the book "Lethe" is not in his best vein. Among the shorter pieces, about forty in number, probably the most admired is "The Vanished Maiden." At all times Mr. Jones has been in popular demand as poet for public celebrations. In this capacity he read before the assembled literary societies of Lewisburg University, in 1880, his poem on

"William Loyd Garrison;" this and that other notable creation of his on "Eloquence," together with the poems which have appeared since the publication of *Lethe*, would warrant a new edition of his works. Notwithstanding his own self-depreciation, the fact is patent to observers that among the very few poetical geniuses which Wyoming Valley has produced, Mr. Jones is one of the finest and most original. There is only one complaint which I have to make against his verse, and that fault redounds to its classical excellence. There is a peculiar gliding movement in his metre, which, while it charms the ear, partially defeats the stress of the thought; but, beneath the surface, all the results of potent imagination are exhibited. If called upon to make a metaphor, I would say that externally his verse is the perfect plane of ice which paves a brook—brilliant, smooth, transparent, hard; gaze but a moment into this ice and you see below one confusion of delicate imageries and wonderful fancies of form. In his poetry, it is difficult to discover traces of any distinct influence unless it be that of Keats. There seems, at first sight, to be a universal grey tone to his work; but interested eyes soon discover this effect to be due, in very fact, to the richness and complexity of colors. Yet he is not a word-painter, though his vocabulary is large. Indeed, I suspect that an epithet is often chosen, not for its picturesqueness as much as for its euphony. From this, however, it must not be concluded that he is not a clear reasoner, for never is he betrayed into an absurdity. Mr. Jones will not reach his merited station in the estimation of the public, until readers recognize that he is not to be read as versifiers are, hastily and carelessly, but with the attention and loyalty that a true poet deserves.

John S. McGroarty, the poet-editor, is young in years, sociable in nature, and unmarried. Whether or not Euterpe in the near future will cease her lyric chords and string the amatory cittern, is a question that would hardly admit of discussion in the province of literary criticism. With an ear



finely attuned to the delicacies of melody, a bright intellect, and a pure taste, Mr. McGroarty has kept his talents bright by use; and many of later productions have the strength and finish of a more experienced hand. The poet has a heart that can feel for the wants, woes, and trials of humanity in its humblest and most despised walks; and he pours out his soul, in his patriotic verses, in strains of touching, sympathetic tenderness. "The Saddened Heart" and "A Lost Friend" stand, in some respects, unequalled. They are somewhat sad in tone; and, were it not the poetic and artistic temperament to feel keenly and instinctively all the emotions of life, I should incline to charge their author with moroseness. They are, however, so sweet and unpretending, so pure in purpose and gentle in expression, that they disarm criticism of all severity. "In Memoriam," a decoration ode, is a graceful and genial rendition of the iambic heptameter verse, and at no time during the poem is the attention fatigued. His command of rhythm is finely evident in "Florence," a poem which contains some of the purest elements of harmony and beauty. "Cæsar" ranks with his best work; it is richly descriptive and rhetorical, although the poet is more touching in his less labored verses. Mr. McGroarty's elegiac poetry is meritorious and deserves cordial recognition. It is marked by ease and delicate discrimination rather than by strength or vigor of conception; yet it has a simple and placid tenderness, a lively and observant fancy, and a soft and musical versification which can not but impress the most careless reader. His poems have been published, mainly, in the *Philadelphia Times and Press*, *Wilkes-Barre Leader and Record*, *Boston Pilot*, *Hazleton Plain Speaker*, and *Scranton Republican*. *The Poets and Poetry of Wyoming Valley*, compiled and edited by Mr. McGroarty last year, is a work of great labor. It contains one or more poems by each of the better known writers—with a few unfortunate omissions—and should occupy a place in every family library in Wyoming Valley. Youth

and maturity have unfolded to Mr. McGroarty wide knowledge and broad experience; and, since he is yet on the sunny side of life's prime, coming years will doubtless add a rarer note to his gamut and his poetic future fully vindicate the rich promise of the present.

Claude G. Whetstone, the poet-journalist, has passed his novitiate as "an enamored architect of airy rhymes," and is fully disciplined for genuine singing. Mr. Whetstone is at present employed on the editorial staff of the *Philadelphia Times*; and, although not, strictly speaking, a Wyoming Valley poet, he was for a time editorially connected with the *Hazleton Plain-Speaker*, and later with the *Scranton Republican*, and has always been identified with our local song. As a journalist, his editorials have an ease and raciness that bear unmistakable marks of diversified culture. He has read much and thoughtfully, and mingled with society in all its phases; and his editorials possess an accuracy of statement, a breadth of view, and an independence of party dictation that make them quite as trustworthy as readable. Modest, retiring, and singularly sensitive, Mr. Whetstone has always been unwilling to place on his verses their real value. He has a nervous temperament, a rich imagination, a quick sensibility, and his share of that melancholy of which poets are made. His verses are not characterized for any very profound emotion or deep thought; but they have a perfection of metre, a beauty of diction, and a smoothness of finish rarely excelled by his fellow bards, and this is much to say in these days, when so many clever pipes are heard. Mr. Whetstone's poems are chiefly lyrical, and generally of a pathetic cast. They evince a tenderness of thought, a purity of feeling, and a love for the beauties of nature that rightly lead his readers to conclude that this singer has not dug in vain for the genuine ore of poetry. "Two Singers," "After Death," and "The Poet's Song" give token of a grace of expression, a musical versification, and an air of melancholy tenderness so congenial to the poetical temperament. "By the Stream," a sweet and lux



urious strain of pure description, has been set to music and accorded general favor by contralto soloists. "Mine Enemy," "The Difference," and "A Recollection" are delicately conceived and as delicately executed; and "Shadow All," "Fate," "All Is Well," and "While We May" are marked by a vein of fine moral reflection, and a freedom of versification and poetic art.

Theron Giddings Osborne, better known to the reading public as "Tom Allen," was born on the shores of the beautiful Lake Wynola, in Wyoming County. For some years he has taught school; but at present he is one of the staff of the *Wilkes-Barre Leader*, in which paper most of his poems and poetical squibs have appeared. His portfolio holds upward of sixty original verse compositions. Of these, perhaps the most popular is "Annie's Grave;" the most admired, "The True Muse;" the most poetical, "The Woodland Spring," and the most unique, "After Vacation." While Mr. Osborne may be taken to task for his carelessness in technical finish and impatience of legitimate structure, nothing is more an evidence of his abundance and originality, than this very readiness to transgress the lesser rules of versification. His "True Muse," an admirable poem, resembles an edifice which the artist has permitted to rise hap-hazard from its base. The result is neither Ionic nor Gothic, Romanesque nor Queen Anne, but a novel, though beautiful, confounding and mingling of all orders and decorations of architecture. It is in critical, not in creative faculty, that he is untrained. Fluent as is his diction and exuberant his thought, too much of his work betrays lax self-judgment. Only after persistent and skillful practice on the part of the rider, will a Comanche mustang begin to exhibit the points of Attic Pegasus. Many of his compositions are humorous and deftly satirical, and show what an able hand the author has with which to treat the absurdities of contemporary customs, politics, and science. These prove, better than do his earnest productions, the extent of his fine vocabulary and his power for apt phrasing. But it is not here

that Mr. Osborne's true province lies. These spurious little off shoots, I trust, are but the tangled growth at the base of the daisy's stem. The flower is just beginning to blossom above them in its white and golden hues. The real inward character of his poesy cannot yet be determined; but his muse, I shrewdly suspect, like the bride of "That son of Italy who tried to blow e'er Dante came," is attired in two costumes,—an outer radiant garment of gayety and mirth, and the concealed inner sackcloth of thought and austerity.

Miss Ione Kent is not of an uncertain age; she is young. Naturally, then, the biographical data for this sketch are few. She was born in St. Paul, and at the age of seven became fatherless. With her mother she then came east, and has lived since that time in the country. Her home is at Waymart, Wayne County; but at present she is situated in New York city, where she is a student of art at the Cooper Institute. One year, too, she spent in the studio of a portrait painter at Binghamton. Miss Kent's poetical productions have appeared, either under her proper name or the assumed one of "Francis Hale Barnard," in the *Wilkes-Barre Record*, *Toledo Blade*, *Northern Christian Advocate*, *Phrenological Journal*, *Literary Life*, *Chautauquan*, and *Peterson's Magazine*. The titles of these poems are very suggestive of the character of her muse. Here are some of them,—"One Perfect Day," "At Twilight," "Beside the River," "A Dreamland Tryst," and "When Summer Comes." Miss Kent aims to be the interpretress of summer's moods and appearances. She is versed in the nomenclature of scenery; she faints in the hazy perspectives of uncertain landscapes; she sympathetically throbs before the pulsing flame of dawn, and lingers with regret over the wasting beauties of sunset. I suspect that among these luxuries of the soul she moves in true poetic despair, for the poet's spirit, in its moments of inspiration, is a sad mingling of exaltation and dejection. It is at first exalted, when the wordless idea comes bounding along the nerves; it shoots to de



jection, when the lips vainly move to convey an adequate expression of that idea. Her poetry is of that golden kind which would win from Edgar Allen Poe the praise of having beauty for its sole object; but whether beauty and truth are identical, I presume Miss Kent has not sought to argue. Nevertheless, with her, as with Messrs. Osborne and Powell and "Steenie Grey," it is very apparent that beauty is the end which she unconsciously struggles to attain. In these young writers there is no approach to weary didacticism; all their feeling, if not their expression, is warm and sensuous. In Miss Kent, more than in the others, one observes that excited fervor of attempt which signifies how heavily the burden of the unintelligible weighs upon her. What she has accomplished, however, betrays a more careful impress of simplicity and taste than is to be discerned in the work of most of our younger poets. Her artistic sense is more acute; she applies her brush more thoughtfully and carefully, and uses her pencil with greater accuracy.

William George Powell, the son of a well-known Welsh bard, is one of our youngest and most promising writers of verse. He was born at Scranton; spent one year at the Military Academy at West Point; graduated from the Pottsville High School in 1886, and is at present engaged in teaching. He has a well-stored mind, a compass of invention, and a luxuriance of poetic fancy. Mr. Powell's faculty for singing is well disciplined; his verses are replete with classical allusions, and always fashioned after the best models of poetic art. Occasionally his stanzas are so subtly constructed that they lose that sweet and unstudied simplicity which pleases the ear and touches the heart of the reader. He has written eight sonnets which are shrewd, caustic, careful, and manifest energy of thought and condensed felicity of expression; they represent widely different grades of motive and execution, and are sometimes stiff and labored, but never violate the canons of taste and criticism. Of these, "The Death of Burns," "Longfellow in Italy," and "Shel-

ley's Prometheus Unbound" probably best indicate the classical correctness and closeness of his style; although in several other of his sonnets, there are some delicate touches and pleasing descriptions. In "The Welsh Harp" and "The Dream" he marshals his dactylic measures with the ease and precision of a trained lieutenant; they seem to have been dictated by real pulses of feeling, and are full of lyrical melody and natural tenderness. The ode "To Venus," published in *The Saturday Argus* is marked by a vein of fine feeling and happy expression. And as the half-gleeful, half-prophetic carols of the bluebird on a fair March morning announce the return of the feathered songsters, these early liquid, bubbling notes by Mr. Powell herald a new voice in the Wyoming Valley choir, from whom maturer strains are not unlikely to flow.

Miss Hattie Clay, now a teacher in the Scranton public schools, has, under the assumed name "Steenie Grey," been a frequent contributor of poetry to the *The New York Tribune*, *Philadelphia Press*, *Peterson's Magazine*, and the newspapers of northeastern Pennsylvania. Her early published verses are rather faulty in artistic respects, the author seeming to prefer the flash of momentary inspiration to the severer but more enduring labor of correction and rejection. All young writers must, I suppose, pass through a moulting process, and during this time discordant notes may be expected. Her later verses, however, show that she has emerged fully feathered and in a better voice. "The Angel's Gift," the most poetical of her productions, is clear, natural, ingenious, and vigorous. In this, as in "Adam's First Wife," her vivacity of style and sense of unique design are richly evident. "Daisies," "June," and several other of her descriptive lyrics, have a flow of subtle fancy and sonorous versification, which are steeped in the flood of ideal beauty. Her amatory strains possess traces of real passion, and a vein of healthy sentiment and poetic fancy, versified with ease and elegance. The poet's cheerful and amiable disposition is generally



apparent in her verses; and, notwithstanding their obvious crudities, they always find response in the universal heart.

Edward A. Niven was born at Cuylersville, N. Y., in 1841; graduated from Medina Academy in 1856, after which he went to New York City and entered the mercantile business with an uncle; at about this time he began to write short stories and sketches for weekly newspapers; from 1861 to 1865, he served in the civil war, finishing with Sherman's march to the sea; during the war he wrote weekly letters to the *New York Mercury*, and at its close returned to New York City and regularly entered journalism; after a period of several years' reportorial work on the metropolitan daily papers, he connected himself with the *Genius of Liberty*; subsequently he served as city editor of the *Savannah News*, *Minneapolis Free Press*, *Deluth Tribune*, and *Scranton Republican*; while connected with the *News*, of Savannah, he was associated with Joel Chandler Harris, author of well-known "Uncle Remus'" plantation verses. Mr. Niven has at different times served as special correspondent in the New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina State Legislatures, and frequently written letters from the coal fields to the *Herald*, *World*, *Star*, and *Sun*, of New York City; the *Times*, *Press*, *News*, and *Telegram*, of Philadelphia; and the *Tribune* and *Times*, of Chicago. As a general correspondent he has been in all parts of the Union, and his acquaintance with public men and the editorial fraternity is extensive. In 1876 he founded the *Leader*, at Pittston, afterwards merged into the *Union-Leader*, on which paper he has since been principally employed. While Mr. Niven's prose writings are not without their points of excellence, his strongest work has been done at the bidding of the Muses; and many of his shorter lyrics are not unworthy the pen of a laureate. In his poetical writings, he happily unites strength with grace, and originality with dramatic talent; and his perfection of the art of graceful and fluent expression is finely apparent in all his lyrical efforts. His words and sentences, al-

though placed with seeming artlessness, are always thoughtfully chosen and judiciously varied. "Baby Grace," the fairest flower in his poetic chaplet, has a tone of lofty sentiment, and celebrates a father's affections with unusual grace and tenderness. "Foreboding," pitched in somewhat the same key, has all the exquisite versification of John S. McGroarty, and the pathetic tenderness of Claude G. Whetstone. His decoration odes are among the most melodious specimens of elegiac poetry in our local song; but his ludicrous and satirical verses are greatly inferior to his more serious poems. His comic opera, "The Smith Family," has some flashes of genuine sunny humor, and has been produced on the stage with a fair degree of favor, although it has no great literary merit, and scarcely ranks with his best work.

It is to be profoundly regretted that Mrs. Verona Coe Holmes, of West Pittston, is permitted by the public—the Wyoming Valley public at least—to continue in the obscurity which at present shrouds her life. After "Edith May," Pennsylvania has had no poetess with a better claim to recognition. Mrs. Holmes is a native of Michigan, where she resided until grown to womanhood. Her father was a clergyman, who, consequent to his calling, was often obliged to shift his habitation. Miss Coe was educated at the Kalamazoo Female College, and for some years was engaged in teaching. It was about twenty years ago that she came to West Pittston, but before that time her productions began to appear in the *Chicago Tribune* and other western journals. Interested observers of our local literature will be surprised some day, when the volume of her collected poems appears, as it in duty ought, to find that she has written so much; they already know that she has written well. There are so many of her pieces that reach the plane of high excellence, that in this cramped sketch I hesitate as to which I should give the preference of mention. "Late Summer," which came out in Theodore Tilton's *Golden Age*, is a tender and subtly descriptive lyric. "In the Fall" and "Mabelle" appeared years ago in *Peter*.



*son's Magazine*. Other poems appeared in *Moore's Rural New-Yorker*. But it is to the Hon. Theodore Hart that the most honor accrues in connection with the publication of Mrs. Holmes' poems, for by far the greater number have appeared in his journal, *The Pittston Gazette*. To convey to readers unacquainted with the quality and range of her work an adequate impression of its character, is a difficult pleasure, for it is painful to think that such rare genius still remains unsuspected in the midst of a literature-loving population. Her poems have such a quiet, modest, yet self-confident bearing, that criticism has no excuse for cavilling. They have a sweetness and intellectual strength to be found elsewhere only in the poems of the lamented Helen Hunt Jackson. There is no parleying with Art here, for Art is the obedient servant of her feeling; and her feeling is not extravagantly impulsive, for it is softly subdued by the calm resignation of religious faith. Genius Mrs. Holmes undoubtedly has, and genius of a whiter light than most of the poetesses, known to the wide country, can display. It is the disadvantage of the privacy of her career that she has not been forced by critics to bestow more labor on the artistic polish of her stanzas. Her caesuras occur sometimes with alarming frequency; but they are uniformly well managed and turned to good account, as in the case of "Siste Viator." Sometimes, too, she allows stanzas to run into each other. But these are trivial errors. The originality and sincerity of her inspiration are unimpugned. "Restored" has a delicacy and exquisiteness of recital almost incomparable; but the best of it is that the same can be said of so much of her work. The public, too, must understand this; and it is the earnest expectation of her present small circle of admirers that the complete edition of her valuable poems will soon be in press.

Dr. John T. Doyle was born in Dublin, Ireland, December 9, 1837; educated in private schools and at Trinity College, Dublin; graduated in surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons, at Dublin, and for a time served as assistant sur-

geon in third Madras army corps; for eighteen months he was in the service of the East India Company, when he resigned and entered private practice in Australia; he re-returned to Ireland in 1863, and four years later came to America and settled at Wilkes-Barre, where he has since resided. For several years he was connected with the *London Saturday Review* and the *Illustrated London News*, contributing various literary articles, and descriptive sketches of scenes in Australia. In an article entitled "Prospects of the Irish at Home and Abroad," published many years ago, he prophetically demonstrated the land question in Irish matters long before the present leader, Parnell, was at all heard of. Dr. Doyle is a good versifier but not a great poet; his style is sometimes turgid and often monotonous. He has, however, an ear for metrical harmony; and in his lighter verses, he lays bare the springs of human action with marked ability. In healthy tone and natural Irish wit, these humorous ditties are not unlike some of Tom Moore's lighter verses. The Doctor has also written serious pieces, which, if not highly poetical, are harmonious in tone and artistic in execution. Of these, "The Sunbeam and the Brook" is the most smoothly versified; it has a musical versification, some delicate fancy, and seems to flow freely from nature.

Patrick F. Durkan was born and educated in the town of Swinford, County Mayo, Ireland. He evinced in youth a strong propensity for literary pursuits, and began to write at an early age for the newspapers of his native country. He came to this country for the first time in 1860, but returned the same year and published a small volume of poems, which was favorably reviewed by the national press, particularly by *The Irishman*. After a two years' stay in Ireland, he went to England, where he engaged for a time in mercantile pursuits. In 1865 he returned to Ireland, and the following summer sailed for America. He taught school in Susquehanna County for several terms, and in May, 1869, settled in Scranton, where he continued to live and teach up to June, 1886, when he resigned, and



moved to Philadelphia, his present residence. Mr. Durkan's verses are largely the inspiration of his native island home, some of which are humorous, witty, genial, and full of the fun and frolic of Irish life. "Alice O'Connor," the most admired of his poems, is spirited and forcible. "The Cracker Boy," "Honesty," and "Angels of Earth" have a vein of moral reflection, some ingenious thought, and occasionally a striking imagery. "John's Tour in Ireland" is unique, but protracted at too great length. "Irish Melodies," and "Father John," his best poems, have an easy and flowing versification; the former shows him to be not only a luxurious, but also a melodious singer, and many lines in the latter are rich, ornate, and highly poetical.

Mrs. Annabel Morris Holvey, of West Pittston, a native of New York State, came to the Wyoming Valley in 1876. Prior to that time her poems and prose sketches were contributed to the *Albany Evening Journal* and other New York papers. Since then her graceful lyrics have appeared mostly in the *Pittston Gazette*, some in Wilkes-Barre and Scranton papers. They are distinguished by delicate imagery, depth of sentiment, and a fluent but sometimes careless flow of melody that show the born singer whose thoughts flow naturally to music. "The Pansy's Message" tells a pathetic story of war times in tender verse. "Starlight," "Twilight Musings," "Passion Week," and "Dividing the Church" carry the inspiration born of profound feeling. "Christmas Eve" is worthy of Carleton's music, and "Outcast," probably her strongest poem, is full of passion and power. She has written some short stories and occasional articles for newspapers in and out of the valley.

Although not a poet of the first dimensions, Dr. P. J. Higgins knows what good poetry is, and can write it. That he has frequently courted the Muses is evident from the fact that his portfolio contains over one hundred verse-compositions. Fifteen of these are translations from the German, Irish, and French poets. Of sonnets, odes, and Troubadour songs, he has written six of each. The re-

maining selections are chiefly lyrical, including songs of labor and love, hymns, and patriotic, temperance, and sentimental pieces. Several poems are written in the Irish brogue, and a few in the original Irish language. The translations have an easy smoothness and correctness of versification, and give token of a familiarity with several modern tongues. Of his sonnets, the one on "Sorrow" is best fashioned; of his odes, "To Purity" is the choicest; and of his Troubadour lyrics, "The Boating Song" is the sweetest. "Hope and the Rose," "Bear Up," and "Ye Petty Birds," his cleverest lyrical selections, are marked by melody, ease, and sincere feeling. The Doctor's poetry is frequently deficient in fire and energy, its sameness often making it tedious; but his versification is free and sonorous, and his creation of scenes and objects rich and unique.

While a student at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, R. B. Brundage sometimes wrote verse-compositions, two of which appeared in Mr. John S. McGroarty's collection. Neither selection evinces very much true creative genius; but they are written with infinite prettiness, and do not fall short of a certain standard of grace and correctness. "Immortality" contains some pleasing poetical language and dazzling metaphors, and "Remembrance" has a soft and musical versification.

J. Andrew Boyd has written a few verses which deserve cordial recognition and meritorious mention. While some of them are not altogether in harmony with the canons of versification, they have a vein of pleasantry and a strain of pure and fervent passion. "Excelsior," published in *Puck*, is a light, fantastic effusion; "Hidden Grief" contains some forcible, but awkward lines; "Cometh the Night" breathes a healthy moral feeling, but the poet is diffuse, and not over careful in the construction of his sentences; "Four-Leafed Clover," is a hasty and spontaneous production, and "Contraries," the most poetical of his fancies, is intermingled with genuine pathos.



Rev. M. J. Morgan was born in the town of Caranaryon, Wales, in 1861. The prominent seats of instruction he matriculated in have been the Cynnog Grammar School, North Wales; the Llandovery College, South Wales; and the Theological Seminary, of Princeton, New Jersey. He began preaching quite young, and came to this country as a minister of the gospel. After a reconnoitering tour through the States of New York, New Jersey, Vermont, and Pennsylvania, he settled at Sugar Notch, where he continued to preach for two years. He is at present located at Carbondale, having received and accepted a call from a church there in January, 1887. Mr. Morgan has moralized in verse on such subjects as "Faith," "Hope," "Life," "Midnight," "Beyond," "Somewhere," "Life's Morning," "Night Thoughts," and "Science and Faith." These are strains of tender pensiveness, and give assurance of a genial and pious spirit; but the poet's fine feeling, graceful fancy, and poetic diction are best indicated in an ode "To an Uprooted Tree" and a fragmentary lyric entitled "In a Cemetery." Though immature, several of his pieces contain strong poetical thought, which gives promise of rarer future notes. His early verse is but the bud of the rose, whose complete inflorescence will, I doubt not, reveal a goodly quantity of poetic beauty and fragrance.

The late James Law, of Pittston, wrote several poems in the Scottish dialect which show him to have been possessed of a truly poetical imagination. Mr. Law was born in Scotland, and came to America and settled in Canada when he was a young man. Just before the outbreak of the civil war, he removed to Scranton, where he lived for a few years; he next took up his residence at Pittston, where he continued to live up to the time of his death, which occurred last year. Always actively engaged in the duties of his occupation, Mr. Law's writing was merely accidental pastime. He possessed a vast fund of information; but, being diffident, he was always reluctant to give his productions to the printer. Among his best pieces are "Auld Uncle Wallie," "My

Ain Cannie Mither," and "Lines on a Dead Canary;" these selections give token of an inborn poetic elasticity and a sparkingly original style. Several of his cleverest poems have been published since his death by Hon. Theodore Hart in the *Pittston Gazette*.

One is often compelled to regret that young writers are so prone to coin their heart-pangs into marketable verse; yet the melancholy strains of Mr. T. P. Ryder are so soft and plaintive that the vein of sadness, which runs through them, is oftentimes their chief charm. Mr. Ryder has written a number of light verses; but he is poetical only in his more serious productions. His pieces have appeared in the local papers and in the *Philadelphia Times* and *Detroit Free Press*. His versification is defective; but for melancholy tenderness, his verses are not altogether unlike those of the late Father Ryan, the poet-priest of the south. "Light and Shadow" and "A Memory" are tender and touching, and evince a sensitive feeling and a beautiful poetic vein.

Lawyer C. P. Kidder, of Wilkes-Barre, has written some verses which show marks of genius, but they betray the author's want of taste and artistic sense. His poem on "Garfield" is a noble strain of fervent passion, pregnant with celestial fire. "Old Vets," a decoration ode, is not without merit, but it contains a number of crude and extravagant lines.

Like that rare exotic feathered visitant, the orchardstarling, the voice of Miss Alice Smith is seldom heard. Miss Smith is a teacher in the West Pittston public schools and has published only a few of her verses. She is not an original thinker, but possesses the happy art of presenting good thoughts in pleasant and impressive language; and she has a tender, humane sympathy which warms her writings and brings her near to her readers. "Cui Bono," the best-known of her productions, has some pleasing sentiment and fine feeling.

Timothy Parker, now in his eighty-first year, is an Englishman by birth, his maternal



ancestors having belonged to the Commonwealth, or Parliamentary party. He came to Wilkes-Barre in 1862, and since that time he has been a frequent contributor to the local papers. Mr. Parker's verses contain some fresh descriptions, and suggest the glamour of forests, mountains, and lakes.

Dr. R. H. Tubbs, when a young man, frequently wrote verses for the *Lawrenceville Sentinel*, edited by John C. Knox, who was afterward a judge of the Supreme Court. Dr. Tubbs was graduated from the Medical College of Woodstock, Vermont, in 1844, since which time he has practiced medicine in Wyoming Valley, writing occasionally both in prose and verse for the *Plymouth Star*, and other local newspapers. For several years he was lecturer of chemistry and botany at Wyoming Seminary; and he has occasionally prepared literary and scientific lectures, which have been delivered before literary societies.

Fred Shelley Ryman was born April 26, 1858, at Dallas, and attended Wyoming Seminary and Cornell University each for three years. While a student at the latter institution, he wrote for the *Cornell Era*, and later was connected with the *Binghamton Leader*. Mr. Ryman's present residence is Lockport, New York, where he is engaged at special literary work for *The Occult World*. His productions have been printed in the *Arkansas Traveler*, *Puck*, *Judge*, *Gordell's Chicago Sun*, *Texas Siftings*, and the *New York Mercury*. One needs to read but a few lines of Mr. Ryman's work to acquaint himself with the fact that this writer is a close student of the poems of Lord Byron; for the same profound morbidness which pervades the pages of the author of "Don Juan" is everywhere apparent in the verses of his admiring pupil. Some of his pieces are marked by quaint humor, acute observation, and shrewd, sarcastic sayings; but they are often so caustic as to produce an unpleasant effect on the minds of thoughtful readers. "Ostler Joe," a well sustained narrative, which has some of the qualities of Will Carleton's ballads, is sadly marred by an af-

fectatious prelude and a coarse postique. "Antony's Last Ante" is smoothly versified, but many of the lines are scarcely more than echoes. "Is it So?", a lyric, and "The Night of Michael Angelo," a sonnet, are his best selections; the former has a vein of better feeling than is found elsewhere in his work, and the latter, though immature, has some richness of fancy and invention. Many American youths have been caught in the whirlpool of a foolishly extravagant adoration of Lord Byron, but none so violently as Mr. Ryman. "The Pleasures of Life," published at Ithaca in 1879, in the most considerable stream that has yet gushed from the exuberant intellect of this still youthful and excusable aspirant. To Byron we are to assign all the merits and demerits of this boyish attempt in verse; to Byron, the audacity in the perpetration of doggerel; to Byron, the reckless, braggadocio expression of trite aphorisms; to Byron, the careless, saucy pedantry of preface, mottoes, and footnotes. Byron, in a word, is the cause, and Byron the permeating influence of this wretchedly humorous and weakly didactical metrical effort.

Being of a rather retiring disposition, Alfred S. Greene has succeeded in shunning opportunities which would have made him better known as a writer of verse. Somewhat like that rare-voiced royal minstrel, the hermit-thrush, he has preferred to try the strings of his instrument at leisure and in solitary places. Mr. Greene came to Wilkes-Barre from New York in 1869, and has since resided there, having previously been engaged in mercantile pursuits, mostly in the West Indian trade. His verses, with the exception of two poems published in *Potter's American Illustrated Magazine*, have all been printed in the local papers. His best efforts are "The Wyoming Monument," "On the Centennial Celebration of the Massacre of Wyoming," "Dick Benson's Last Yarn," "The Little Tin Pail," "The Love of Children," and "The Storm." The first and second of these appeared in *Potter's Magazine* for July, 1878, and contain some delicate touches and clever



descriptions. "Dick Benson's Last Yarn" is a lengthy narrative poem, but well sustained throughout. "The Storm" and "The Love of Children" are commonplace verses, expressive of pure and ennobling sentiments; but the author's clear poetic feeling is best displayed in "The Little Tin Pail," a poem which is marked by great tenderness and melody.

Misses Bertha and Ella Millard, of New Columbus, are ladies of refined literary tastes. Besides supervising the work of a farm, which they have operated for some years, they have, from time to time, written tender and simple songs which are instinct with the true sentiments of fireside love and joy. Their poems flow freely from nature; and the singing birds that nest about the hedges of their fields, the quiet brook that traces its way lazily through a meadow just beyond their rural home, and the sighing branches of trees that margin the lanes and roadsides, all find voice in their songs. Their verses are little more than orchard notes, but they are always soft and plaintive and sometimes bright and animated.

Rev. Charles Holland Kidder evidently believes that "books quicken, strengthen, and perfect a spiritual life." Rarely a minister of the gospel—or any person, for that matter, other than a professional litterateur—can be found who has given so much attention to books and authors as Charles Holland Kidder; and more rarely still, one possessing his fine combination of high intellectual qualities. Mr. Kidder was born at Wilkes-Barre, December 27, 1846, and educated at Yale College. He was graduated from the West Philadelphia Protestant Episcopal Divinity school in 1877; and he has since, at different times, officiated as rector of Episcopal churches at Pottsville and Wilkes-Barre. It is only natural that one possessing his diversified culture and wonderful command of easy language should sometimes write for the press. His thoughts "too deep for tears" have occasionally found vent in light, fantastic rhymes. These are sometimes wanting in salient points, but they are always well ex-

ecuted and are pure and elevating in their tone and influence.

Thomas J. Ham, of Honesdale, has written some verses which are marked by great vigor as well as beauty and pathos. Among these are "Lips of Clay," "Nothing in Vain," "The Faithful Heart," and an elegiac poem written on the death of John Brown. His verses are often hasty and spontaneous, but they usually have a harmony of versification, richness of natural description, pathetic tenderness, and a vein of moral sentiment and original thought. Mr. Ham seldom aims high in his metrical compositions, and he seldom fails. His John Brown elegy is an outpouring of the most delicate poetical feelings from a keen and sympathetic heart. "Lips of Clay," another of his graceful effusions, is tender, original, and melodious. Mr. Ham is a clever journalist, and the writer of a good many tart, racy, and pungent editorials. His historical sketches of Wayne County represent unwearied research and are quite as artistic as reliable.

Dr. L. Byron Avery, of Centremoreland, Wyoming County, and Mrs. Mary B. Richart, formerly of Pittston, have both written mediocre verse. Dr. Avery learned the printer's trade in the *Wyoming Democrat* office, at Tunkhannock, and afterward studied medicine. He was graduated from a New York Medical College, but has never given much attention to the practice of his profession. He has usually written under the assumed name of "Nat Zykes." To Mrs. Richart belongs the honor of having named the beautiful Lake Wynola. Having visited it many years ago, and charmed with the scenery which surrounded it, she wrote a short prose legend of the lake for the *Pittston Gazette*, which established the present name. Mrs. Richart has also written a legend of the lake in verse, but it has not yet been published.

The Welsh inhabitants of the United States cling with singular tenacity to the traditions and customs of their fatherland. Poetry and song, the national heir-looms for ages, have their devoted guardians wherever the lan-



guage is spoken. Irish, as pure Erse, has almost entirely ceased to be heard; Cornish died a hundred years ago; Gaelic and Breton have severely altered under the corrosion of change; but the Welsh utterance still retains all the vigor and purity of its original phrase. No language is better adapted than the Welsh for the expression of feeling. Such is its plasticity and energy, that any species of emotion, from tenderest sentiment to raging wrath, can give vent to itself in corresponding sounds of pure vocalic sweetness, or grating guttural harshness. The verse can sing in low harmony to the tinkling of a rivulet, or echo with equal resonance the clamor of a mountain storm. Some stanzas may consist of no letters but vowels and trills, while in others the consonants may crowd so thickly as seemingly to defy pronunciation. The tone of utterance, as this indicates, may vary from delicate Tuscan to coarse Teutonic; the words have forms as numerous as can be supplied by the moods of the Latin, together with the euphonic changes as complete as can be furnished by the Greek. It is not wonderful that such a language should have so rich a poetical literature, but it is strange that the range of composition is so narrow. The poems of Wales are nearly all included in four divisions,—sacred, didactic, heroic, and lyric poetry; and yet, it is a literature whose dawn is dated by Druidical myth, and which is still in the fervor and perfection of its sunny afternoon. Its mid-day glory was in the Twelfth Century, when, as Thierry observes, the Celts lived on poetry. Then it was that Edward First, in order to subdue the patriotism and valor of the people, issued that horrible proscription which put all the bards to death, and ruined what at that time was the finest civilization on the globe. The influence of Celtic legend and poetry on English thought and expression has not until recently been adequately considered, and is as yet but imperfectly estimated. Since Matthew Arnold and Henri Taine have begun to study the subject, and special professorships of Celtic Literature have been established at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, it

is evident that here is an important force which philosophical criticism has hitherto failed to calculate. To make the following sketches more lucid, I must precede them with a few comments on the bardic customs of the Cymry, and their methods of versification. The "Four and Twenty Measures" composing the whole of Welsh prosody have remained unaltered since they were thus established by David ab Edmund at Carmarthen in 1451. A close examination of examples of these measures disclosed to me some interesting peculiarities of structure. The verse is syllabic, not accentual. In some cases I found a triple rhyme extending the whole length of a page; in other cases the alliteration is so intricate as to be wholly incomprehensible to a novice. Of the great variety of poems of strange construction and individual name possessing no counterpart in English verse, perhaps the most celebrated is the Englyn, a four-line poem of thirty-one syllables so exacting in metres, rhymes, and alliteration, as to make its composition a task of extreme difficulty. The American public is well acquainted by this time with the character of the Eisteddfod, that grand institution which, from its founding by Caswallon in the days of Caesar to the present, has been the mainstay of the oldest of existing tongues. Originally, Eisteddfods were sessions of the bards alone, but the same now includes essayists and singers. The greatest of these art tournaments—as such they might be called—ever held in this country was that of 1875, at Hyde Park, which lasted for two days. The lists were under the great Concord tent, procured for the occasion, and the six meetings were attended by assemblages averaging in number five thousand people. Eisteddfods have always been of frequent occurrence in this region, but it is only at the principal ones that the leading bardic contest is for "a chair," to win which is the highest renown a Welsh bard can attain. Accompanying the "chairing" of a bard and other features of an Eisteddfod, are quaint Druidic ceremonies which it is not to my purpose to describe here. One little explan-



tion, however, I will insert: Not all poets are bards. To be a bard, a poet must pass his novitiate as a successful amateur, and receive his degree and a pseudonym with much traditional pomp at the hands of the Arch Druid, of Wales, or of the Chair-Bard, delegated by him to confer that honor. Bards, further, may be divided into two classes, those who have won "chairs," and those who have not. Wyoming Valley can boast of a few chair-bards, a great number of bards, and a population of novitiates. I have made researches concerning the most meritorious of all these, but being unacquainted with the Welsh language the notices are necessarily brief and barren of any criticism. Rev. J. P. Harris (Ieuan Ddu) is the author of a sacred drama entitled "Joseph and his Brethren," and is a very ready composer of Englyns. Of his songs, the most popular is one on the death of Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Harris is a Baptist clergyman who came from Wales in 1840. In war times he ministered to a congregation at Hyde Park, but at present he is pastor of the English Baptist Church at Nanticoke. Rev. Joseph E. Davis, now deceased, although the author of a hundred hymns, is best known by his productions in prose. One of his books is entitled *The Religions of the World*, but his great work was a *System of Theology*, in four bulky volumes. The opinions and conclusions of the venerable divine are soundly Orthodox, and confirmatory of the Calvinism he preached. His remains are interred at Hyde Park, where most of his life labor centered. Rev. John "Gwrhyd" Lewis is a graduate of Carmarthen College; he came to this country in 1878, and is at present pastor of the Welsh Congregational Church, of Wilkes-Barre. Although it is claimed that, being in the prime of life, he has not put forth his greatest efforts in poetry, Mr. Lewis is a "chair-bard," than whom there is none more honored. His principal poems—"Joshua," a heroic of several thousand lines, "Garfield," and "Cleopatra"—are accounted to be perfectly classical and notable for their rich and careful imagination. Rev. T. C. Edwards, (Cynonfardd), of Kingston, owing

to his elocutionary powers, is probably the best known Welshman of Wyoming Valley. He, like Mr. Lewis, is a graduate of Carmarthen College, and came to this country as a Welsh Congregational minister. His first charge, in 1870, was the church at Brookfield, Ohio, but in a short time he came to Wyoming Valley, and situated first at Wilkes-Barre and then at Kingston, where he resides at present as pastor of the Welsh Congregational Church, of Edwardsville, and professor of elocution at Wyoming Seminary. Mr. Edwards has on two occasions won "chair prizes," first at an Eisteddfod at Pittston, on the poem "Solomon," and again at the great Eisteddfod of 1875, at Hyde Park, on the poem "The Mayflower," which afterwards lent its name to the title of a collection of his poems. This volume met with a ready sale, and is much prized by Welsh readers, especially for its minor poems, among which the most popular are "The Babe and the Moon," "The Star of Hope," and "The Youth." Two of his longer poems are "Cromwell" and "The Maniac." H. M. Edwards, Esq., the present District Attorney of Lackawanna County, is not more esteemed by the people of Scranton for his legal ability than he is by the Welsh people of Wyoming Valley for his poetical genius. By his contemporary bards he is acknowledged to be the most brilliant lyric poet of their number, and the opinion is expressed by an informed critical taste, that of all the poets who have been sketched in these papers, none is more pre-eminently a true poet than Mr. Edwards. He came to Scranton in 1864, as a recent graduate from the Normal College of Swansea, and has made for himself position as a lawyer, and popularity as a speaker. As a poet, Mr. Edwards is especially noted for his elegies. His longest productions are a drama, entitled "Queen Esther," and an ode on "Roger Williams." Mr. David C. Powell, the most original of the Welsh bards, came to the valley in 1865, and has a wide reputation as an able poet and essayist. Among his poetical pieces are elegies, soliloquies, and odes of various descriptions, with titles such as "Happiness,"



"The Outcast Girl," "Melchisedec," "Generosity," and "The Grave of the Babe." Of his numerous prose works the most important are the treatise on "Geology," and a recent essay on the "Mineral Resources of Schuylkill County." In the beautiful Forty Fort Cemetery is a monument over the grave of a genius. It is a simple stone erected by lamenting bards to preserve the memory of David Jenkins (Llwchrog), the Welsh Poe, who gave brilliant promise as a poet. He came from Wales in 1869, and had written marvelously on "Love," "To a River," and "The Eisteddfod." He met his untimely death in a Carbon County coal mine, and was buried at Eckley; but his friends and admirers later removed his remains to their present lovely resting place. Others who have written much Welsh verse, and meritoriously, are John H. Powell, David Jones (Dewi Ogle), Isaac Benjamin (Bardd Coch), Daniel J. Evans (Daniel Dru), and James W. Reese (Athenydd), all of Scranton; Benjamin Thomas (Alaw Dulais), of Taylorville; D. L. Richards and Morgan C. Jones (Cledwyn), of Wilkes-Barre; H. G. Williams (Gieddwysyn), of Plymouth; Thomas C. Evans (Cilcenin), of Nanticoke; and Griffith P. Williams (Tegynys), John R. Davis, and Moses D. Evans, of Kingston.

These papers would in nowise be complete if consideration were not given to the notice which Wyoming Valley has received from poets beyond her borders. The homage that has been paid to her is not more devout than her beauty can demand. Already she has a queen-like reputation in history and literature. Of the countless many who have dwelt in fantasy, dreaming of her charms, but few have had the temerity to engrave upon a scroll a statement of their passion. What they have written is good or indifferent, but never bad. There is one reflection which has become quite habituated with my thought: What a different tale of poets and poetry would have to be told to-day, if Coleridge and Southey, eighty years ago, had but perfected their schemes of paupersocracy, and had settled with their friends upon the banks of

Susquehanna's "untamed stream!" If the solemn cenotaph to Chatterton rising from the mountain side, instead of remaining a poetical contemplation, had developed into the sweet fact, over what a grand literature it would stand the guardian saint! Hazlitt probably had "Gertrude of Wyoming" in mind when he wrote that studiously elegant criticism on Campbell's poetry, which reads, "A painful regard is paid to the expression, in proportion as there is little to express, and the decomposition of prose is substituted for the composition of poetry." The truth of this assertion is so attenuated that it ceases, in its obscurity, to be just. "Gertrude of Wyoming" is the absolute creation of a prolific fancy. Campbell was obliged to make even his own landscapes and create his own *flora* and *fauna*. He knew nothing of the scenery of Wyoming himself, neither did he have an opportunity to decompose any prose work on the subject, for if he had he surely would not have turned the valley into a museum for condors, palms, flamingoes, and alligators. Perhaps Hazlitt meant to declare that Campbell's poetical sentiments are not intrinsically poetical, but that opinion would be absurd. Yet it seems as if Spenser himself and Lord Byron have been the only poets who have invested the Spenserian stanza with semblance of real inspiration. However, the Art, which tossed to and fro the shuttle of verse, and weaved "Gertrude of Wyoming," was swift and passionate in her movements; and the three cantos are cut from the whole cloth of imagination. It must be admitted that the artificiality is not so observable but that it can be said, "'Tis so like sense, 'twill serve the turn as well." Who is he that, possessing the ideality, having once been taken captive by the magic of the prelude, "On Susquehanna's side, fair Wyoming," has not followed the tale to its pathetic close in a sort of obvious reverie? What rapture is more tender and sublime than that awakened by the vision of Gertrude in her lonely bower laughing and weeping in turns over Shakespeare's endeared volume? Campbell is noted for such meteor-flashes of



perfect idea and expression. Certainly nothing in English verse is more purely poetical than this description of the trembling Gertrude reclining on the mossy knoll like a lovely personification of Nature, and listening with emotion to the accents of consummate Genius. Fitz-Greene Halleck was the poet of disillusion, though never on that account of cynicism also. "Alnwick Castle" and "Wyoming" have an undying melancholy charm, a tantalizing mournfulness. In both poems, after a soft and tender prelude sung to inflame the listener's ideality, does this American Elia fatally smile and sadly proceed to the disrobing of the very images of his own conjuring, which then hustle abashed into ignominious retreat. The explanation of the paucity of his compositions is undoubtedly here,—it was not because he lacked poetic sensibility that he failed to respond to his inspirations; it was—that in whatever realms of fancy his spirit wandered it was still attended by the gnawing consciousness of earthly reality. The twelve Spenserian stanzas, entitled "Wyoming," have these characteristics. The poem opens in the finest vein of Campbell; and, as it is at once perceived, owed its origin to the "Gertrude." Dreams and exaltations are at first rehearsed, and then comes lightly spoken but sorrowful raillery. No Gertrude, Waldegrave, Albert now, he sings—and so admits the utter ideality of Campbell's creations. Halleck's burlesque meets no resentment in the hearts of his readers, for all can taste the sentimental flavor of its mock-earnestness. If his "Wyoming" has one fault it is that too many moods of mind chase each other with such rapid fickleness through so short a space of rhyme. But of all the poems which have yet been written relating to our valley, Campbell's and Halleck's, it must

be confessed, are by far the greatest, both in respect to Genius and Art. Mrs. Lydia Huntly Signourey, who, during the first half of the present century, was such a strong force in moulding the moral and intellectual agencies of the American mind and heart, did not in her busy career pass unnoticed the romantic beauty and tragic history of Wyoming. A well known critic has said of her poems, "They are more like the dew than the lightning; yet the dew, it is well to remember, is one of the most powerful of nature's agents—far more potential in its grand results than its brilliant rival." And what applies to her collected volume of poems, applies well to her poems, "To the Susquehanna" and "Wyoming." They are not great creations, but the former has a mildness and delicacy that reminds one of Mrs. Hemans' "Voice of Spring," combined with the graceful descriptions of Bryant, and the latter is a tender but earnest appeal for the erection of a monument in memory of those massacred at the Wyoming battle. Professor Henry Copee, LL. D., of Lehigh University, wrote and read at the Centennial of the Wyoming massacre a pleasant poem, entitled "Beautiful Wyoming." It is a poem of consummate taste and genius, and contains some delicate touches and accurate descriptions. "The Tribute of Massachusetts to Wyoming" was the title of a graceful and melodious verse composition by Rev. C. D. Barrows, of Lowell, Mass., read at the one hundredth anniversary exercises of the massacre of Wyoming. Mrs. Mary Sparks Wheeler, of Philadelphia, has written a poem, entitled "The Wyoming Centennial," and the cleverest selection of Col. John A. Joyce's volume of *Peculiar Poems* is entitled "Wyoming Valley."

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